

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

Positive ‘Whānau Management’: Privileging the Centrality of Whānau and Culturally Specific Understandings of Child Discipline for Effective Psychological Practice with Māori

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Clinical Psychology
at Massey University, Wellington
New Zealand.

SARA MARAEA POANANGA
Ngai Tai, Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Kauwhata

2011

©Sara Poananga, 2011.

Permission is given for a copy to be utilised by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced in part or its entirety without written permission of the author.

ABSTRACT

The passing of the ‘anti-smacking’ law in 2007 took the practice of child discipline to the forefront of public debate in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Questions emerged concerning effective alternative forms of discipline to physical punishment. While there is a great deal of psychological knowledge on discipline, there is a dearth of research that specifically examines Māori child-rearing and discipline practices. This is important knowledge for psychologists to have, considering their role in the prevention of child abuse and their ethical obligation to promote positive discipline strategies. As children of Māori ethnicity are currently over-represented in child abuse statistics, it is particularly important that psychologists acquire the awareness, knowledge and skills needed to work competently with Māori when addressing issues of child discipline. In spite of these negative statistics, this thesis promotes a strength-based approach to working and researching with Māori and aimed to explore the *successful* Māori child-rearing values and practices in operation today, and how these behavioural discipline strategies can be effective in psychological practice with Māori.

Adopting a ‘Māori research paradigm’, which incorporated both Māori-centred and Kaupapa Māori research principles, in-depth semi-structured interviews were employed to determine how Māori psychologists, as experts of best practice for Māori, negotiated psychological practices when addressing discipline. This was combined with a case study of a contemporary Māori whānau operating in strength with the use of a positive non-smacking approach to ‘whānau management’. Thematic analyses of the data led this thesis to conclude that privileging the centrality of whānau and culturally specific understandings of child-rearing and discipline is necessary for effective psychological practices that draw on standard behavioural discipline strategies. This thesis then addressed the ways in which these understandings are relevant to New Zealand psychologists’ ethical obligation to cultural competencies.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis could not have been possible without a number of very important people who shared this research journey with me. I would like to thank the psychologists who took the time to sit with me and share their valuable knowledge, even though they are all busy with the wonderful mahi they do. A big warm thank-you also goes to the woman who talked with me about her whānau child-rearing experiences; it was a joy and privilege to hear your story. I owe my thanks to Te Kahui Mana Ririki, an organisation with a wonderful kaupapa, for helping me to connect with this whānau and for supporting me in this research.

My thanks also go to my ‘research whānau’ who guided me throughout this thesis. A special thank-you to my primary supervisor, Dr Leigh Coombes, whom I was very fortunate to have. Thank-you for always giving such wonderful and prompt feedback, invaluable ideas and helpful reflections right until the end. I would also like to acknowledge my secondary supervisors, Professor Paul Merrick and Professor Janet Leathem for their clinical input and who also played a particularly important role in my journey through the Clinical Programme. Thank-you also to Byron Perkins, Felicity Ware, Lily George and my aunty Atareta Poananga for providing their cultural feedback and editing on my drafts at various stages of writing.

I am very grateful for the financial and academic support provided by the Ministry of Health, as well as Te Rau Puawai and the network that I am fortunate to be a part of. I would also like to thank the office of AVC Māori and Pasifika for sending me on the most amazing writing retreats, where I was privileged to be among other Māori thesis writers in a spiritually rejuvenating and motivating venue.

Lots of aroha goes to my own whānau and numerous flatmates over the years, who supported me in all ways possible. Thank-you to Mum and Dad, Rickie-Lee and James, Maia, Nan and Gramps, Peter and Karen. I would also like to acknowledge my grandpa Bruce Poananga, who passed away during the final writing, but who always encouraged me to work with our Māori people. Finally, aroha and thank-you to Scott, for giving me the extra push and comic relief when I needed it and putting up with all that comes with being with someone writing a thesis. Ka nui te mihi ki a koutou katoa! E miharo ana ahau kua whiwhia ou nei manaakitanga i roto i aku mahi tuhingaroa.

FOREWORD

My interest in Māori child-rearing practices stemmed from my growing awareness of my Māori heritage and my passion and interest for children and young people. Growing up in the small town of Te Teko, New Zealand, I never thought much about my cultural identity; it was just part of my life. I was quite oblivious to the fact that I was the fairest looking Māori in the Kapa Haka group or that my teacher had arranged special te reo (Māori language) extension classes for me. I was aware that being Māori came in many different forms however and my whānau later developed a story that always makes people laugh; that my older sister is called the dark chocolate, my little sister the caramilk and me, the milky bar chocolate. It wasn't until I moved from a public to a private high school in Hamilton (where continuing my Māori studies was not an option I could take), followed by being quite homesick while completing my undergraduate degree at Otago University, that I became more consciously aware of my Māori cultural identity through the absence of my connectedness with other Māori people, language and culture. From there I quickly developed a desire to help our Māori people in some way.

I have always had a passion and love for children. I began babysitting the local kids as a young teenager before working part-time as a nanny for many years alongside my studies (often questioning why the parents couldn't or weren't able to have their nan look after the kids in the holidays, like my parents could). In the university breaks I was drawn to work for child-focused agencies such as Child, Youth and Family Services, and Barnados. I first put my two interests together when I carried out my honours dissertation on Māori whāngai,¹ where I explored the positive relationships between grandparents and their whāngai mokopuna (grandchildren) in my tribal area of Ngāti Porou. I noted the gentleness of their relationship to one another, and the positive way in which they approached the discipline of their children.

At around the same time, the debate about the 'anti-smacking bill' had begun in New Zealand, which sought to amend section 59 of the Crimes Act, 1961 ('the Act'). Due to my own understanding of the psychological literature around learning, together with my interest in supporting children's rights, I was naturally in support of this Bill and often found myself in many heated debates! It became quite clear that there was a

¹ Where the child is given to family members to be raised.

mindset of acceptance towards the use of physical punishment or ‘smacking’ and that common knowledge of effective alternatives was scarce or simply ignored. I was particularly interested in what alternatives Māori found helpful and effective as, although there were negative stories about Māori child abuse in the media, I knew that there were many positive stories to be told as well. Therefore, this thesis begins to tell these positive stories, and in doing so aims to demonstrate how knowledge of Māori practices of child-rearing and discipline are necessary to help inform our psychological practice. In this way, this thesis aims to provide a helpful piece of research to guide psychologists in their continuing cultural competencies in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
FOREWORD.....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
THESIS OVERVIEW	1
CHAPTER ONE: Literature Review on Discipline Practices	3
Conceptualising Discipline.....	3
Effective Discipline Approaches	4
Physical Punishment: Causes and Consequences.....	6
Should Physical Punishment be used?.....	11
Physical Punishment and the Law	12
Encouraging Change.....	15
Summary.....	17
CHAPTER TWO: Māori Child-Rearing and Discipline Practices	19
Introduction: Māori Response to the Act	19
Historical Research.....	20
Current Research on Māori Discipline Practices.....	22
Summary.....	24
Rationale for this study.....	24
CHAPTER THREE: Methodology	27
Introduction	27
The Need for Māori Research Methodologies	27
Kaupapa Māori Research.....	28
Māori-Centred Research.....	32
Chosen Methodology.....	33
Methods	35
The Participants	35
Recruitment of the Key Informants (Māori Psychologists)	36
Recruitment of the Case Study Whānau.....	37
Data Collection	38
Thematic Analysis: Analysing the Interview Transcripts	40
Thematic Tables of Themes	41
CHAPTER FOUR: Understanding the Whānau	45
The Changing Nature of Whānau.....	45
Children as Taonga.....	51
Whānau Intervention and Collective Responsibility	53
Shifting and Swapping	60
Permissive and Relaxed.....	61
The Special Role of Kaumātua.....	64
Whakawhānaungatanga and Kai	65
Wairua	69
Cultural Identity.....	71
When Whānau Struggle.....	76
Summary.....	79
CHAPTER FIVE: Behavioural Interventions and the Law.....	81

Conceptualising Discipline.....	81
Public versus Professional Understandings	81
Teaching Values and Pro-social Behaviour.....	83
Control	86
Practicing Discipline	86
Factors Influencing Approach	86
Strategies	90
Effective Discipline	94
Crimes Amendment Act (Section 59)	99
Smacking	99
Conflicting Views.....	103
Information Sharing and Education.....	107
Summary.....	111
CHAPTER SIX: Conclusion	113
The Research Journey: A Summary of the Findings.....	113
Limitations and Future Research Recommendations	116
The Implication of the Findings in this Research.....	117
REFERENCES	121
APPENDICES	137
APPENDIX A: Information sheet for Māori Psychologists.....	137
APPENDIX B: Information Sheet for Case Study Whānau	139
APPENDIX C: Consent Form.....	140
APPENDIX D: Interview Guide for Māori Psychologists.....	141
APPENDIX E: Interview Guide for Case Study Whānau.....	142
APPENDIX F: Authority for the Release of Transcripts Form	143